



Australian Bureau of Statistics

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Making Australia's Communities Count

Tomorrow's Harmony Day enables Australians to celebrate our cultural diversity. Australians will help measure this diversity on 8 August when we are all asked to complete a Census form.

Without the Census, determining the extent of Australia's cultural wealth becomes a guessing game. Questions on the Census form about ancestry, religion, birthplace and languages spoken are also used by a variety of organisations for allocating and targeting services to particular cultural groups. The Census collects information for approximately 280 countries of birth, 240 languages and 120 religions across Australia.

The Census has been quantifying Australia's cultural diversity since the very first national census in 1911. Back then, Australians were asked for their birthplace, year of arrival in Australia and their religion. The most common countries of birth for Australian residents in 1911 were Australia (with 77% of the population), followed by England (10%) and Ireland (5%).

In the following Census, in 1921, people were also asked for the birthplace of their parents. In 1976, the question of language use made its Census debut and in 1986, an ancestry question was first asked.

According to the most recent Census, held in 2001, the most common countries of birth of Census respondents were Australia 72.6% (13,629,481 people) and England 4.5% (847,365). 34% of the population indicated they had English ancestry.

The most populous religions in Australia were Catholic (26.6% of the population) and Anglican (20.7%). Buddhism (1.9%) and Islam (1.5%) were the most populous non-Christian religions in the country.

The languages other than English most spoken in Australian homes were Italian (1.9% of the population) and Greek (1.4%).

Head of Census, Paul Williams, said: "It is important to ensure that all communities are accurately counted and that all of the questions on the Census form are completed".

"Because the Census counts every person in Australia," said Mr Williams, "it is the main source of accurate statistics on Australian communities, both large and small."

The 15th Census to be conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), will take place on Tuesday 8 August, 2006.

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